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ABSTRACT

A series of three studies investigating affective warmth was conducted. For the purpose of investigation, this quality was conceived as (1) a long term pattern of parental attention and responsiveness with positive affective tone (i.e., love), and (2) a reinforcer manipulated to shape behavior in the present. Each of the first two experiments involved approximately 60 mother/child pairs from white middle-class families. Children participating in the first study were 5 years of age; those in the second study were drawn from kindergarten, second-, and fourth-grade levels. In both experiments, the mothers' total warmth and their children's cheating/compliance were assessed. Treatments varied in terms of the conditions under which rules of a game were taught and the game was played. (Either children were taught the rules and played in the presence of their mother or mothers taught the rules to their child and children played alone.) Solitary behavior as well as interactions were observed, categorized, and recorded. In the third study, cross-cultural data at a societal level of analysis were employed to test conclusions derived from the results of the first two studies. It was concluded that findings generally supported the hypothesis that global measures of warmth should be divided into at least two dimensions: one reflecting the parent/child relationship over time and the other reflecting an immediate resource parents use to shape their children's behavior. (RH)

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TWO DIMENSIONS OF PARENTAL WARMTH

Roger V. Burton

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position or policy.

A recurrent conclusion in theories of socialization and personality development is that the affectional bond established between a child and a parent has deep and long lasting impact on the child's development. Although there are occasional suggestions that too much of a good thing can be unfortunate or even harmful (e.g. Levy's Maternal Overprotectiveness, 1943; Watson's warning that "mother love is a dangerous instrument, 1928, p. 87), the current consensus, represented by all theoretical persuasions, is that the establishment of a strong, trustworthy affectional bond based on positive warmth, attachment, or love leads to desired outcomes in the socialization process (e.g. Ainsworth, 1979; Becker, 1964; Bowlby, 1969; Harlow, 1958, 1971; Harlow & Suomi, 1970; Hoffman, 1976; Sears, Maccoby & Levin, 1957).

Both contributing to and influenced by this conclusion are studies based on self-report measures. Parental warmth relates positively to desired child characteristics when the measures are assessed through interviews and questionnaires (Yarrow, Campbell, & Burton, 1968). Analyses of these verbal measures for the underlying, meaningful dimensions of child rearing result in three basic factors: I. Love (Acceptance)-Hostility (Rejection); II. Control (Restrictiveness)-Autonomy (Permissiveness); and III. Involved-Withdrawn (Becker, 1964; Schaefer, 1965; Symonds, P. M., The psychology of parent-child relationships. New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1939). This integration of rearing practices is appealing, fits nicely with our categories for classifying such behaviors, and provides an analytic system for typing

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parenting styles. However, it should come as no surprise that these three factors, based on dimensions of meaning of rearing techniques, closely mirror the three primary dimensions of meaning in all language (Osgood, Suci, & Tannenbaum, 1957). Love-Hostility is comparable to Evaluation (Good-Bad); Restrictiveness-Permissiveness parallels Potency (Strong-Weak); and Involved-Withdrawn reflects Activity (Fast-Slow) (Burton, 1968). Although it may be that in the real world "good antecedents" (i.e. rearing techniques) result in "good child traits," there is need to control for the evaluative halo that may influence these self-report measures when assessing the relationships between antecedent rearing techniques and consequent child personality.

Some recent studies demonstrate that maternal warmth does not inevitably relate to positively evaluated behavior in the child. Warmth was conceptually divided into two dimensions: the long-term pattern of parental attention and responsiveness with positive affective tone (love) distinguished from warmth as a reinforcer that is manipulated to shape present behavior. Using data from three independent studies, results from analyses based on this distinction provide clarification of the specific processes involving parental warmth that are confounded by assessing warmth as a single, global dimension of the parent-child relationship.

Experiment I

Method

Subjects. Sixty 5-year-old children and their mothers were the subjects drawn from well-educated, white, middle-class families.

Procedure. The children were taught the rules of playing a bean bag game: to stand on a foot marker and to throw each bag only once. After two practice games and stating the rules aloud to the experimenter, the child was left alone to play the game. The game was completely controlled by an observer behind a one-way mirror. This observer recorded the child's behavior during the test.

A week later, the child was again brought into the room with the game and asked about the rules. All children remembered the rules well. Before playing the game, the child's mother was brought into the room to be with her child "while s/he plays a game s/he has played before." These mothers knew nothing about the rules, although they were informed that they were being observed. They were told they would be with the child for 3 minutes and then were to let the experimenter back in the room when she knocked. The mother's presence was a surprise to the child who was told the mother came to be with her/him while s/he played the game. The conversations and interactions were recorded, and the child's behavior scored by the hidden observer.

Measures. The mother's giving positive evaluation, support, and help were scored Total Warmth. These interactions were divided into those contingent on the child's successful performance, labeled Achievement Warmth, and those unrelated to achievement on the game, labeled Non-contingent Warmth or Love. Giving Negative Evaluation was scored as withdrawal of love.

A three-point scale assessed the child's cheating: 1 = compliance to the rules in both test sessions; 2 = cheating in one session only; 3 = cheating in both sessions.

Results

Total Warmth of mother correlated .29 ($p < .05$, see #1 in Table) with the Child's Cheating in the game, clearly not the direction of association predicted from most theoretical models. Our observations of these mothers suggested to us that they were perceiving this situation as an achievement setting demanding successful performance in spite of rule constraints. Based on this impression, Total Warmth was divided into Achievement Warmth, given for successful performance in the game, and Noncontingent Warmth, which consisted of expressions of warmth that were unrelated to the child's performance such as "How nice you look." Achievement Warmth correlated .30 ($p < .05$) with the child's Cheating and Noncontingent Warmth correlated only .05 (n.s.) with cheating (#s 2 and 3 in Table). Assuming that the Noncontingent Warmth reflected a generalized or baseline level of warmth, the sample was divided at the median into mothers low on Noncontingent Warmth and those high on this index. The correlation of Achievement Warmth with Cheating was .51 ($p < .01$) for the Low group, but was only .14 (n.s.) for the High group (#s 4 and 5 in Table). By contrast, Withdrawal of Love produced correlations with Cheating of .14 (n.s.) for the Low group and .35 ($p = .06$) for the High warmth mothers (#s 6 and 7).

Experiment II

Method

Subjects. Sixty-three mother-child pairs served as subjects. The children were distributed across kindergarten (17), second grade (24), and fourth grade (22). There were 33 boys and 30 girls. The sample was again drawn from well-educated, white, middle-class families.

Procedure. Each mother was individually shown how the bean bag game worked and then taught how the game was to be played. The mother was given a cue card with the rules and told they would have 5 minutes to teach their child the rules and "to use whatever techniques you believe are most effective in teaching the rules of the game." The mothers knew they would be observed from the one-way mirror and that the child's behavior when playing alone would be observed. After 5 minutes, the mother left and the child's behavior recorded by the hidden observer.

Measures. Total Maternal Warmth again consisted of giving positive evaluations, support, and help. These scores were divided into codes that were achievement and rule related. Achievement Warmth occurred in the context of promoting successful performance ("Good one! That's the way to throw."), whereas Rule Warmth encouraged obedience to the rules ("You've learned so well how to play" in response to the child's complying with the rules). (Noncontingent Warmth as scored in Experiment I rarely occurred so could not be analyzed in this study.)

A binary code of Compliance/Cheat was used to assess the child's conforming to the rules during the test period.

Results

Total warmth of mother and Cheating by child correlated .06 (n.s.) (#8). When divided into Achievement and Rule Warmth, the r_s became .29 ($p < .05$) and $-.25$ ($p < .05$), respectively (#s 9 and 10). The difference between these r_s is statistically significant ($p < .01$).

Cross-Cultural Reanalysis

Method

Societies used in analyses presented in Whiting and Child's Child Training and Personality (1953) served to test the conclusions derived from the results of Experiments I and II. Thirty-five societies had scores on all 3 measures required for the analyses.

Measures. Dependency, also labeled "initial nurturance of the child by its parents" (Whiting & Child, 1953, p. 238), was used as the index for the general affectional bond or love relationship, comparable to the Noncontingent Warmth of Experiment I. Contingent manipulation of warmth was measured by Use of Love-Oriented Techniques. The cultural index for Conscience, used as the measure comparable to honesty in following the rules of the game, was Patient Responsibility for Illness (cf. pp. 220-233, in Whiting & Child, 1953).

Procedure. The societies were divided at the median on the Warmth measure (Infant Nurturance), and the associations between Love Withdrawal and Conscience recalculated for each half of the sample.

Results

In the original analyses, presented in Whiting and Child (1953), Warmth and Conscience were unrelated ($r = -.06$) and Love-Withdrawal and Conscience were slightly correlated ($r = .10$) (#s 11 and 12). When the societies are divided into those high and low on Infant Nurturance, the contextual effect of the long-term love relationship again comes into focus. For societies Low on the index of long-term warmth, there is no apparent association between use of love-withdrawal techniques

and conscience, the societies being equally divided between high and low guilt regardless of their use of love withdrawal (#13). By contrast, and consistent with the hypothesis being proposed in this paper, societies scored high on warmth show a positive association between use of Love-Withdrawal and Conscience ($\phi = .39$, $p = .042$, Fisher's exact, one-tail test; #14).

Discussion

The interpretation of these findings is that parent-child attachment has two dimensions that need to be distinguished in research on the socialization process. The first dimension is comparable to the lay-person's idea of parental love: a relationship developed over time and based on child care performed with a predominantly positive affective tone. The second conceptual dimension is parental warmth as a resource that is manipulated in the immediate situation to shape behavior. The first dimension, love, is analyzed as a contextual variable that determines the impact of manipulating (giving or withdrawing) affectionate attention in the immediate situation. This distinction places the parent-child relationship in a developmental perspective rather than seeing it as a single variable which is completely manipulable as simply a situational determinant. Only the second dimension of parental warmth is subject to immediate variation, whereas the first dimension requires a much longer history of parent-child interactions distinguished by emotional quality.

These findings fit the general principle of learning based on positive reinforcement: ^{when} an individual is in a deprived state of a desired resource, giving that resource contingently is effective for

shaping behavior. The results of the analyses in Experiment I illustrate this: high scores in the game occurred when the mothers were low on the Love measure and high on giving immediate warmth contingent on performance. In other words, when deprived of love, warmth as a contingent reward is effective. By contrast, giving warmth as a reward was ineffective when the mothers were high on the Love index, a finding consistent with the principle that satiation decreases the effectiveness of a reinforcer.

The findings also fit the paradigm for effective use of punishment: If an individual adapts to a high level of availability of a resource, withdrawal of that resource is effective contingent punishment for shaping behavior. Supporting this general principle are the findings in Experiment I and in the Cross-cultural study that mothers high on the Love measures were effective in shaping the behavior they wanted in the situation by contingently withdrawing warmth, that is by manipulating warmth in a punishment paradigm. The ineffectiveness of withdrawing warmth by the mothers low on Love suggests that when deprivation is the general state of affairs, further withdrawal is not salient.

The findings of Experiment II indicate that it is the contingency of parental warmth that determines what behavior will be strengthened in the immediate situation. Mothers who gave warmth contingent on achievement shaped their children to cheat, whereas mothers high on Rule related warmth strengthened honesty in their children.

In summary, the findings support the hypothesis that global measures of warmth usually used in studies of socialization should be divided into at least two dimensions. One dimension reflects the parent-child relationship developed over time and is labeled Love. This dimension assesses the cumulative effect of noncontingent affection expressed to the child. Current studies of attachment and bonding are addressed to this dimension. The second dimension assesses an immediate resource used to shape behavior. The analyses show that the effectiveness of manipulating this second dimension of parental warmth depends on the level of Love that has been established: withdrawal of love techniques are effective in a high Love context, whereas expressing affection contingently is effective in a low Love context. This conceptualization that divides parental warmth into two components has provided a clearer--albeit more complex--picture of how parental warmth contributes to socializing children.

PARENTAL WARMTH X CHILD'S HONESTY

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Experiment I

- (1) Total Warmth x Cheating, $\underline{r} = .29^*$

Total Warmth divided into Achievement Warmth (contingent on successful performance) and Noncontingent Warmth (Love):

- (2) Achievement Warmth x Cheating, $\underline{r} = .30^*$
(3) Noncontingent Warmth (Love) x Cheating, $\underline{r} = .05$

Noncontingent Warmth (Love) divided into Low and High groups:

- (4) Low: Achievement Warmth x Cheating, $\underline{r} = .51^{**}$
(5) Withdrawal of Love x Cheating, $\underline{r} = .14$
(6) High: Achievement Warmth x Cheating, $\underline{r} = .14$
(7) Withdrawal of Love x Cheating, $\underline{r} = .35$ ($p = .06$)

Experiment II

- (8) Total Warmth x Cheating, $\underline{r} = -.06$

Total Warmth divided into Achievement (contingent on success) and Rule (contingent on compliance to rules) Warmth:

- (9) Achievement Warmth x Cheating, $\underline{r} = .29^*$
(10) Rule Warmth x Cheating, $\underline{r} = -.25^*$

Cross-Cultural Reanalysis

- (11) Warmth x Conscience, $\underline{r} = .06$
(12) Love-Withdrawal x Conscience, $\underline{r} = .10$

Warmth divided:

- (13) Low Warmth: Love-Withdrawal x Conscience, $\phi = 0.0$
(14) High Warmth: Love-Withdrawal x Conscience, $\phi = .39$ ($p = .04$, 1-tail test).